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RUTH WODAK and MICHAŁ KRZYŻANOWSKI (eds) *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Palgrave Macmillan: Houndmills, 2008. 216 pp. ISBN 97802300198874 (pbk) £19.99

Situated at the crossroads of the social sciences and humanities, discourse analysis typically investigates the social uses of oral or written texts in their contexts. After the more theoretical impulses from pioneers like Michel Foucault and Michel Pêcheux, Ernesto Laclau and Jürgen Habermas, more recent developments have testified to the growing need of methods of empirical research. *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences* attempts to meet this demand by presenting a variety of approaches to political discourse. While all the contributors are affiliated in some way or another to linguistics or communication departments at Lancaster or Vienna, most can be considered as close to the Viennese 'discourse-historical' strand of Critical Discourse Analysis. Yet there are also representatives of more interactionist approaches to discourse such as Greg Myers.

Covering a large range of objects and problems of the research process, this volume is made up of eight entries. After Ruth Wodak's introducing remarks on important terms in discourse analysis (such as text, context, genre), political discourse is discussed from different points of view. Gerlinde Mautner sheds light on print media, Helmut Gruber on new media, Alexander Pollak on TV documentaries, Martin Reisigl on political rhetoric, Greg Myers on broadcast debates, Jackie Abell and Greg Myers on research interviews, Michał Krzyżanowski on focus group discussions, Florian Oberhuber and Michał Krzyżanowski on ethnography. All contributors draw from examples and/or own work and richly illustrate what their analytical procedures typically involves. They all give clear presentations of their methods. Following the

linguistic background of most authors, the analyses tend to focus on the linguistic and stylistic features of the empirical material, see e.g. the analyses of rhetorical tropes and devices (Martin Reisigl) or the focus on the generic characteristics of communication on email lists (Helmut Gruber). With its emphasis on the different choices that need to be made in the course of a research project, I found particularly helpful Gerlinde Mautner's reflections on the corpus question.

While the contributions mostly focus on the practical aspects of carrying out a research project, more attention could have been given to the theoretical challenges involved in doing discourse analysis at the crossroads of linguistics and the social sciences. At times, the discourse-historical contributors seem to take for granted what is a fragile social construction for many qualitative researchers (including Greg Myers). Wasn't the whole point of the qualitative project that society and its structure is constructed by the actors (rather than by the analyst)? Against this background, we may want to be more critical than probably some of the CDA scholars seem to be with taking social problems, social structures or social power as a given—as a point of departure that can be investigated without accounting for how different actors may have constructed social order or what they make out of it. In making a case for an interactionist frame of reference, Myers and Abell, e.g., take a somewhat different position on this question, yet without discussing their relation to CDA. I want to emphasize, however, the many interesting impulses and avenues the volume opens up even where some questions remain open. *Qualitative Discourse Analysis* is a vigorous reminder that more needs to be said on the relation between the actor, meaning, and social order.

To sum up, this well conceived and edited volume reminds us of the many fruitful points of exchange between qualitative social research and critical discourse analysis. If you want to study political discourse and if you wonder how to deal with linguistic material in a social science context, this volume should offer just what you need. Carefully structured and clearly written, it presents an array of approaches dealing with different aspects of political discourse. By walking the readers through the different steps of the research process, the contributions give a vivid picture of what it can mean to do discourse analysis.

Johannes Angermüller

Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz